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ABSTRACT

In an effort to understand the role of the arts in small Illinois communities, a broad exploratory study was conducted in nine counties to determine what potential arts audiences want, what local arts resources offer, and what arts programming strategies are suggested by the gaps between the two. Organizational representatives and individuals responded to interviews and questionnaires designed to test perceptions, desires, and behavior. In addition to school and community college programs (considered the most important source of arts activities in most communities), art, civic, and social organizations in all counties provided many and varied arts-related activities including community art shows and concerts, community and professional theater, painting societies, choruses and bands, drama lessons, and artist-in-residence programs. Respondents particularly enjoyed theater and annual community celebrations. Despite differences between northern and southern counties, the population surveyed was generally satisfied with current opportunities for participation in the arts, but dissatisfied with arts opportunities for youth and the arts activities available. Successful arts programming for rural areas must consider the individual character of target communities. Programs for youth stand a good chance of involving parents who normally would not participate in arts activities. (SB)

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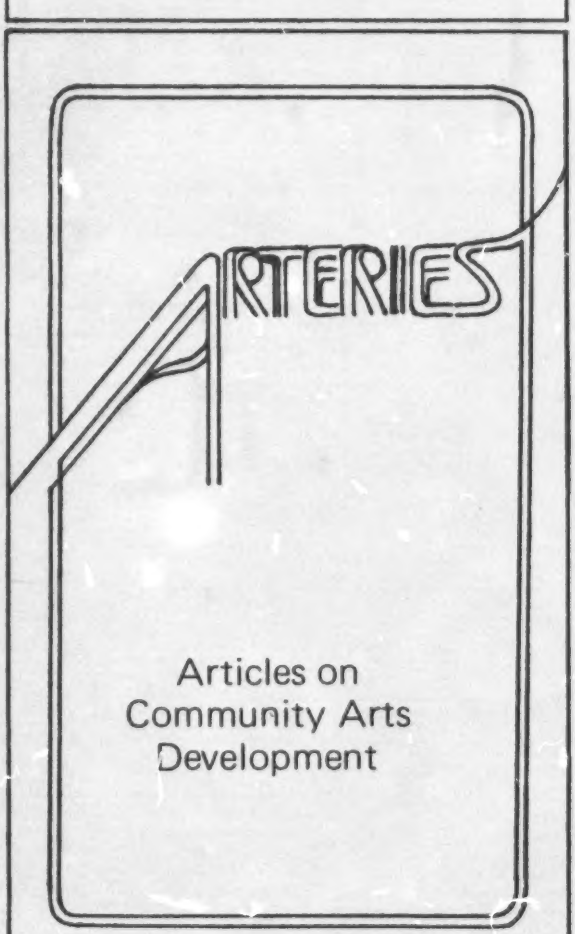


Articles on
Community Arts
Development

# THE ARTS IN RURAL ILLINOIS

by

Weston Hatfield

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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1979

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## *PREFACE*

The Illinois Arts Council and the Department of Local Government Affairs present "The Arts in Rural Illinois" as a joint venture funded by both agencies with additional assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts.

We hired Weston Hatfield to coordinate the project. Wes, a graduate student in Community Arts Management at Sangamon State University, was ideal for the job, for our primary concern was to hire an individual with a keen sensitivity to people in rural areas, their communities and values. Wes and his dog soon became a familiar sight in these nine counties, and we felt that he achieved his objectives admirably. It was a challenging job.

So many individuals and organizations assisted us that it will be impossible to thank each one separately. But we must single out the Honorable Gail Lathrop, Steve Marrs, John Monroe, and Barbara Stoll in Olney, and Vince Tolpo and the twelve artists-in-residence in Freeport for reviewing, advising, and interviewing; Ellen Warman of DLGA for her administrative supervision and production work beyond the call of duty; Barbara Davis of DLGA and Mary Lee Fredrikson of IAC for endless hours of typing; Tom Hayes and Linda Bronsdon for the telephone interviews; Clark Mitze and Bob Salisbury of IAC and Jan Tremail of DLGA for invaluable moral support.

Finally, special thanks to Peter Ewell of Associates in Human Development for donating his time in training the project staff on research techniques and donating the data analysis; and to Michael Ryan for editing all of our reports into a coherent whole.

It was a project which we enjoyed doing. We learned a lot, and feel that both its structure and the information it yielded will be of value to all individuals interested in rural arts.

Anyone wishing additional information should contact us. Statistical analyses, the interview schedules, etc. are available on request.

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# I. Introduction

The Illinois Arts Council and the Department of Local Government Affairs undertook a ten-month rural community arts study to understand better the role of the arts in small Illinois communities. This study was exploratory in nature. Rather than testing particular hypotheses, we tried to keep the broadest possible perspective. Thus we defined "the arts" as "*any* creative activity that one might participate in or attend" and kept our eyes open for clues as to who is not now involved in the arts and how they might come to appreciate the value of the arts to their lives.

### *1. Agency Motivations*

This cooperative venture grew out of both agencies' overlapping concerns for the quality of life in small communities. The Arts Council is committed to the premise that the arts are absolutely essential to the quality of life; it seeks to promote an environment that is beneficial to artistic activities and Illinois artists, to aid in the continuing development of the state's cultural resources, and to make the arts available to every Illinois resident. Recognizing that the residents of a small, rural community are likely to have perceptions and desires quite different from those of residents of a larger urban center, the Arts Council sees an accurate assessment of attitudes, needs, and resources in small communities as vital to the formulation of policy and planning of programs that will fulfill its mandate of giving everyone in the state the opportunity to participate in quality arts activities.

The Department of Local Government Affairs is dedicated to offering the fullest possible array of services to local government units. It has a strong interest in community development, that is, in making a community as liveable as possible through the development of its own resources. It views the arts as an important element in the environment of an attractive community and as a means of providing the people of that community with meaningful alternative ways to spend their leisure time. The Department is exploring the possibility of including a quality of life component in other agency projects.

### *2. Assumptions and Basic Questions*

We based our research on several important assumptions. First, the arts are intrinsically valuable. They perform important educational functions: they heighten our awareness of experience and so enhance our ability to understand ourselves and our world. The arts offer outlets for our desire to express ourselves creatively. They can greatly enrich our lives, and so, like sports and education, should be made readily and easily available to all people.

Second, behavior (i.e. attendance of or participation in arts activities) is based on attitudes, which in turn reflect our entire living experience: physical environment, mores, education, religion, previous exposure to the arts, and other factors. Thus, to understand behavior, one must examine this entire spectrum of experience.

These two assumptions together imply a third: that people not now involved in the arts may recognize their intrinsic value and gradually become involved only if they can view the arts as an integral part of everyday life.

Given these assumptions, we sought the answers to several kinds of questions.

We were interested in how rural people felt about the arts and what they wanted. This meant assessing existing attitudes toward the arts, and if possible, discovering the determinants of these attitudes. How do people perceive the availability of opportunities for arts activities? What organizations do they see as being the most important providers of these activities? What kinds of arts activities do they desire most?

Related were questions about how identifiable groups within the community might be mobilized for the arts. We wanted to document people who already supported the arts, people who might support them, and those who seemed least likely to become involved in arts activities.

We also wanted to identify the distinctiveness of the rural environment. What are the characteristics of a small town which generate community pride, and how might they influence involvement in arts activities? Are there community activities that parallel arts activities, or popular activities to which an arts component might be added? We wanted to develop a list of rationales for becoming involved in the arts which would carry weight among all the various components of the small town environment.

We were interested in what was currently available in rural areas, and what local organizations perceived as their major problems. We wanted to inventory a broad range of community organizations, both artistic and civic, gathering information about their access to facilities, the type and frequency of their activities, the size of their membership and budget, and a sense of their problems and ambitions.

Finally, we wanted to draw some conclusions for programming. How could new approaches be designed and implemented and old programs modified to meet the special characteristics of rural constituencies? And what are the proper roles of the two state agencies in meeting these goals?

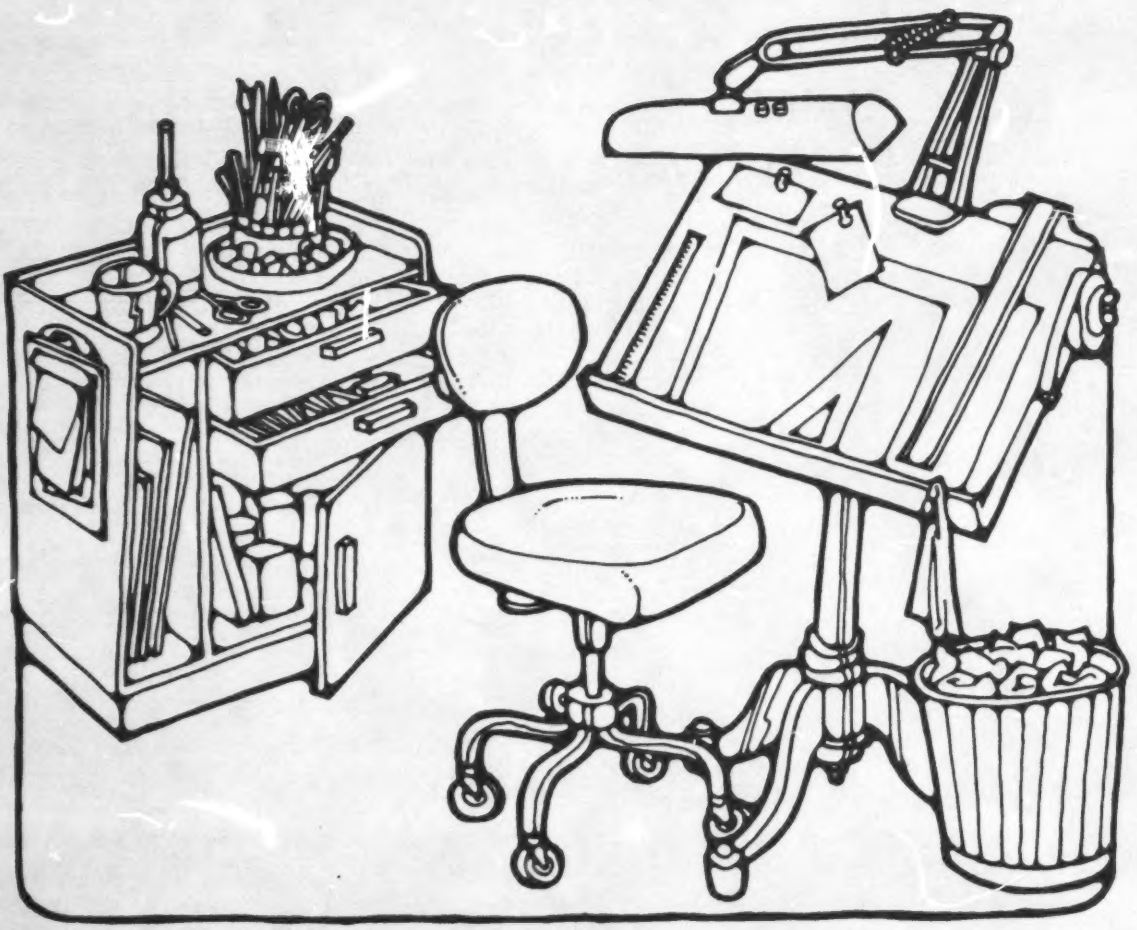
In short, we were interested in answers to these basic questions:

What do potential arts audiences want?

What do local arts resources currently offer?

What are the gaps between the two, and what programming strategies do they suggest?

# II. Designing the Study: Methods



### *1. Planning and Scouting*

Our strategy for data collection centered on a mailed questionnaire to solicit the opinions of individuals, and personal interviews with representatives of a broad range of community organizations. We selected nine rural Illinois counties (Jo Daviess, Carroll, Ogle, and Stephenson in the Northwest, and Clay, Crawford, Jasper, Lawrence, and Richland in the Southeast) for sampling. In each case our selection of counties was based on the low degree of arts exposure in each and their geographical separation from metropolitan areas.

The northern counties are heavily oriented to dairy farming. Freeport, the area's largest city with 27,736 people, is also its industrial center, and is the only community with a substantial black population. Well-known for its attractive scenery, the area draws tourists en route to Galena, home of General Grant.

The southern counties, by contrast, are in the "corn belt"; in addition, however, there is oil in the area, and small drilling operations are ongoing. Southern Illinois, once the center of Illinois commerce, is now much less densely populated than the north. Olney (population 8,974) is the largest community of this five-county area.

Before designing our research tools, we devoted several weeks to "scouting the territory." We talked to newspaper editors, cooperative extension advisors, citizens acknowledged by their neighbors as being interested in the arts, representatives of community colleges, high school band and choral leaders, in short, to anyone we thought might have a thorough knowledge of the community and the role of the arts in it. We hoped to compile from these preliminary interviews lists of active community organizations and appropriate representatives for each, and to develop ideas about the kind of questions which would most effectively yield the information we wanted. It was an important step. It allowed us to informally pretest the language of the questions, to probe underlying values and power structures, and to rank questions according to their value to us, a step which proved to be a valuable decision-making aid when it later became necessary to choose among questions in order to save time and space.

### *2. Fielding the Questionnaire*

Our questionnaire was broadly designed to tap three general areas:

1. Perceptions: What do people currently think is available in their community, and under what circumstances do they think it is available?

2. Desires: What do people think *should* be available to them in their community, and who should apply it under what circumstances?

3. Behavior: How often do people actually attend or participate in arts activities, and how often would they do so if other opportunities were available?

We used primarily closed-ended questions in order to aid in interpreting responses and to ensure a high rate of response, but we included open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth information on all three of the above questions. The questionnaire also included demographic information such as education, occupation, length of residence, age, sex, and marital status.

After pretesting to iron out language ambiguities, we mailed the questionnaire to a random sample of 2000 households selected from the telephone directories of the two study areas. We directed two follow-up mailings at a smaller subsample of 400, and we contacted and interviewed by telephone an additional subsample of 120 to achieve a final total response of 295. The pooled response rate for the three subsamples taken together was 38%--adequate for our purposes. The initial wave of questionnaires was sent out in mid-December, and response was complete by mid-March when analysis began. We then coded responses to closed-ended questions and interpreted responses to open-ended questions. We next used a computer to analyze and explore the pattern of response in each of the three basic areas above and to identify characteristics of particular subpopulations. Before beginning analysis, we checked the representativeness of our sample with census figures, and were satisfied with the results. Where slight differences occurred, they were compensated for with simple weighting procedures.

### *3. Fielding the Interviews*

To assess effectively the existing and potential roles of arts activities in the community, our interviewers spoke with the representatives of community arts councils, painting societies, community theatre groups, officials of schools, colleges and local governmental units, churches, historical societies, camera clubs, men's and women's service organizations, sororities and fraternal groups, chambers of commerce, scouts, and others to develop a "big picture." We needed information on these organizations to compile an "inventory" of local resources which could be consulted in detail for program planning within a particular area.

For our interviews we used two different approaches: one for organizations concerned entirely with arts activities, and a second for non-arts organizations which might (but not necessarily) do some arts programming.

In conducting our interviews we wanted to learn first of all about the interests and activities of different kinds of organizations. We also asked personal opinion questions, with an open ear both to programming ideas and strategies, and to any information that might "color" the data from our mailed questionnaires or suggest answers to new questions the questionnaire data might raise.

Twenty volunteers assisted in the interviewing process. We held training sessions for them in Freeport and Olney, discussing interviewing techniques, alerting them to interviewer bias and the importance of comparability, and familiarizing them with the state agencies and their interest in the project.

The actual interviewing process lasted from mid-December to mid-March, and reached representatives of about 100 organizations.

# III. Interpreting the Results: Analysis

Our research tools provided us with three distinct kinds of information: First, the less structured portions of our personal interviews tapped the informants' views as individuals, rather than as the representatives of particular organizations, and enabled us to characterize broadly many of the elements of small-town life and the programming strategies which they suggest. Secondly, responses to our mailed questionnaire supplemented these rich impressions with "harder" statistical information, and enabled us to document the differences among various population groups, and those between our two study areas. Finally, the structured sections of our personal interviews allowed us to compile a composite picture of existing arts resources in the two study areas, and allowed us to discover the needs and aspirations of a wide range of community organizations.

### *1. The Community Context*

Like all rural areas in the state, our two study areas share a number of demographic characteristics which distinguish them from more familiar urban and suburban areas. First, and most importantly, the population tends to be old and relatively stable; this is especially true in the southeast and the most "rural" of our two areas. 45% of our questionnaire respondents in the northwest and 51% in the southeast have lived in their communities for twenty years or more, and these figures are broadly consistent with census data for rural areas throughout the state. The bulk of the population is less well educated than the state average, but in contrast to popular stereotypes only about 12-15% are farmers. Most people work in a broad range of service occupations.

The small professional population is quite distinctive as it tends to be both young and non-native. This is consistent with much research on rural areas which indicates that talented, ambitious kids from rural areas leave home to "make their fortunes in the city," while the local occupations which they would have filled tend to be filled instead by young city and suburban professionals seeking "the good life" in the country. There is thus a latent split in each community which, as we shall see in the next section, occasionally emerges in attitudes toward the arts. Both groups, however, tend to agree on an important set of "small town" values.

In our personal interviews, we asked what people liked best about their communities. Frequent responses included "the easy pace of life"; the fact that the atmosphere was "quiet and restful"; stability; the unity and camaraderie among community residents; schools, churches, and other community institutions; proximity to state parks; and enough proximity to larger urban areas. Favorite leisure time activities included dining (and drinking) out, movies, athletic and outdoor activities, going out of town and staying at home and watching television.

On the other hand, what they liked least about their communities was the lack of jobs, good dining and entertainment spots, shopping opportunities, and privacy, and a general reluctance to change.

We posed several questions about peoples' driving habits, particularly as they related to arts and recreation. People seem willing to travel 50 or 60 miles for a day's or evening's entertainment. The distance is apparently defined by the location of the nearest city of any size. However, it doesn't necessarily follow that if someone will drive fifty miles to Terre Haute for an event, that they will travel anywhere within a fifty-mile radius. People leave town to shop, to go out to

dinner, to see a big-name, first-run movie, or to go to the theatre--all activities that they can only find to their satisfaction in a larger city. They do seem to enjoy just getting out of town for a change. Yet, simply because something is missing from their community doesn't necessarily mean that they would like to have that activity at home. People enjoy the freedom of having to put up with big-city problems like traffic and noise only when they feel like it. In short, people would probably go to Evansville and Terre Haute even if they could find the same activities in New Hebron.

We were also interested in those events which arts activities might be related to, events of proven community interest. To the question, "What is the most anticipated event of the year?", people frequently mentioned holiday weekends, particularly Labor Day and the Fourth of July--times in which many communities have festivals. Cookouts sponsored by local service clubs, fall festivals sponsored by area merchants, and the county fair are also popular in terms of attendance. A number of communities have chowders with each town having its own treasured recipe. Parkersburg's is regarded as one of the best. High school athletics are also extremely popular.

The most anticipated arts event will often be a school activitiy, like an annual musical, or a Christmas concert with the community's combined church choirs. People recognize local painting societies as cultural resources, and will generally attend any show featuring the work of local talent. Community theatres are visible and popular. In the northwestern counties people look forward to Timber Lake's semi-professional productions. No comparable theatre organization exists in the southeast.

Behind all these questions stood a critical semantic issue: what did people understand by the term "arts"? Responses to the open questions on the mailed questionnaire indicated a very diffuse understanding of "the arts," and at the beginning of each interview we presented our own broad definition of the term. But we had the impression that while people may call a community theatre production or a concert at the community college or a movie "art," they seem to appreciate them as recreation. They seem to make more classical associations with the term, "the arts": opera, orchestral music, or most often, a painting on a museum wall, none of which seem pertinent to the lives of most of the people living in small communities.

### *2. What do People Want?*

In dealing with the responses to our mailed questionnaire, our first interest was to characterize the general pattern of response, isolating key differences between the two study areas to be explored further at a later stage of the analysis. To reiterate, we were interested in three distinct dimensions of response - perceptions, desires, and actual participation in community arts activities.

Overall, perceptions ran about 10% below desires, indicating that there is moderate dissatisfaction with the arts activities currently available. The gap between what is seen to be available and what is wanted is more apparent when opportunities for children are considered. 26% of our respondents feel that the arts are currently "completely unimportant" in the schools, while only 5% think that this ought to be the case. About half of our respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the available ways they could spend their leisure time, but almost half also complained of too little opportunity for arts activity. Once again, the figure rises (to 63%) when applied to opportunities in the community for youth. One interesting result here is that the demand

for arts activities for kids *in general* seems greater than for arts in the schools. Significantly fewer people say that the arts should be "very important" in the wider community. At the same time, however, most people think that the arts ought to be more important in the schools than they currently are.

There is a distinct difference between the northern and southern regions in their respective levels of perceptions and desires. The south is significantly lower in perceptions; 27% of our southern respondents perceived the arts as being "not very important" or "completely unimportant," compared to only 11% in the north. However, desires are similar in the two areas, and this suggests real differences in the opportunities available to the people in each area: if more opportunities were available to the people in the south, their perceptions would probably change.

In order to explore the nature of these opportunities, we also inquired about whether people were satisfied with the availability of different art forms - live dramatics, live concerts, and arts and crafts exhibitions. Satisfaction levels for the two areas in each of these forms were similar except for live dramatics where significantly more southeastern than northwestern respondents expressed dissatisfaction with current offerings. In general, people were more dissatisfied with the availability of performing arts events than with exhibitions.

Our interviews corroborated a significant desire for performing arts activities. In our sample counties residents are always within twenty-five miles of a community theatre outfit. The northwestern area has a particularly strong theatre tradition. Freeport's Winneshiek Theatre Group claims to be the country's oldest completely amateur, continuously-running community theatre. The Timber Lake Playhouse in Mt. Carroll is the summer home of a semi-professional company that draws well from a thirty-mile radius. In the southeast, many of those whom we interviewed travel often to the Little Theatre in Sullivan, even though it is a drive of at least sixty miles for most residents. Community Concert Series in Olney and Freeport have provided classical music programs to those communities for many years. Every high school has a music program, and some towns have a community band or chorus.

At the same time, our interviews show a high degree of satisfaction with available opportunities to attend exhibitions and receive instruction. School systems provide young people with opportunities to participate, community colleges offer continuing education courses, and commercial ceramic and craft shops often offer classes as part of their business. In general, people seem more satisfied with opportunities to *participate* in artistic activities than to attend live performances.

To complete our picture of the general pattern of response in the two areas, we wanted to go beyond perceptions and desires to see if people actually used what resources were available to them. Using four broad categories of activities - live dramatics, live concerts, exhibitions, and arts instruction - we compared the percentage of respondents reporting that there had been a given activity within the past year with the percentage actually attending that activity. Interestingly, there were no substantial differences in availability between the two areas, but there *was* a substantial difference between the percentage attending live drama in the north and the south. Many more people attend what is available in the north, and they do so almost twice as frequently as in the south. The major problem in the southeastern area thus appears to be not *availability* but *quality* of local dramatic offerings. Availability of and attendance at musical events and art exhibitions were roughly similar in the two areas, but northwestern respondents were almost twice as likely to have attended an arts or crafts class than their counterparts in the southeast.

We then examined sources of activities and obstacles to participation. Schools are perceived to be the most important source of arts activities in both areas, but opinions differed on the second most important source. In the north, clubs and organizations are seen as second in importance, while in the south, area community colleges hold this position. In fact, in the south community colleges actually rival the public schools. Churches are of moderate importance in each area, while professional touring groups rank last. Evidence indicates that this low ranking is less an indication of low preference than it is of minimal exposure. Finally, our interviews suggested another important arts resource: individuals. Each community has people who are perceived by their neighbors as being particularly knowledgable about the arts. It might be someone who paints or is active in a community theatre group. A new resident in a community would likely be referred to this person for information about a community's cultural offerings, and any budding art endeavor in the community would want this person in its corner.

There were no major differences between the two areas in terms of perceived obstacles to participation or attendance. Time and distance were most often mentioned. Lack of information about an event was considered moderately important. Our interviews confirmed these factors, as well as suggesting other ones. Respondents frequently mentioned the weather--not surprising since we were interviewing during the middle of Illinois' worst winter in years.

Subject matter is another important factor. People want to be entertained, and a musical or light comedy will outdraw serious drama every time. They seem more likely to attend something that they are familiar and comfortable with, like a show they have seen on television or at the movies, than something foreign to them. It seems important that the material presented does not conflict with the values and mores of the community. In Robinson (Crawford County), a group started an Equity summerstock theatre company several years ago. The venture folded after two seasons, and reasons given for its demise are relevant here: poor management, lack of community participation, and "risque" material. Apparently they could not draw consistently enough to support the high salaries of the stars in the selection of plays. Equity rules restricted community participation, and their repertoire failed to take into account the conservative nature of their audience.

### *3. What do Different Categories of People Want?*

In addition to getting a broad picture of general attitudes and behavior in our two study areas, we wanted to use the results of our mailed questionnaire to help us identify particularly active or needy subgroups of the population. We therefore broke down our pool of respondents according to six different demographic characteristics - sex, marital status, occupation, education, age, and length of residence.

Not surprisingly, we found that women have higher perceptions of arts activity in the community than men do; but desires in the two groups are similar. The pattern is reversed for arts in schools, where women have slightly lower perceptions and higher desires than men. The likely explanation of this phenomenon is that women are closer to the schools, more likely to know what is going on there, and don't like what they see.

Our check on marital status revealed a distinct population group in the north, consisting of young singles, with perceptions higher than average and desires significantly higher. We also found that, curiously, the strongest support for the arts in schools is among those without children at home.

Of our six demographic variables, occupation proved to be the most strongly related to attitudes, apparently independent of education. We subdivided our respondents into four occupational categories: professional, white-collar, blue-collar, and farm. There appeared to be a high correlation between occupational status and perceptions in the north, but not in the south. Apparently, high levels of activity are perceived to be available in the north, but only by a limited segment of the population. In the south, the perceived lack of opportunity is dispersed more evenly among occupational groups. In both areas, the farm category is the one with the lowest perceptions and desires. Significantly, there was perceptual agreement across all occupational groups about the lack of opportunities for youth.

Education is another important factor. There is a strong correlation in the south between the amount of education and the level of perceptions and desires. The corresponding relationship in the north is less pronounced.

Age and length of residence are less useful as predictors of attitudes, although the young seem to have slightly higher desires and perceptions, as do those who are either very new to a community or those who have lived there the longest.

In most respects, we found that the factors influencing behavior were similar to those affecting attitudes. Education is an important exception, however, since it seems to be a more important influence on behavior than occupation; the opposite was true when we were dealing with attitudes. It also seems that there are important demographic determinants of participation in different art forms. The most artistically active portion of the northern population is its young singles, and, judging from our open-ended questions, this group seems particularly attracted to performing arts events. In the south, no such group emerged. Performing arts events, overwhelmingly non-professional, were attended by a broad range of people.

Patterns of drama attendance reveal the greatest differences between the two areas. Attendance is higher in the north, and this fact is related to both education and occupation. In the south, this relationship is less apparent. Again, it is possible to understand these regional differences in terms of the types of theatre offerings in the two areas. Residents of the northwestern counties have relatively easy access to theatre of professional calibre, while southeastern residents rely on mainly school and community productions which in turn attract a greater cross-section of the community. In the south there is a stronger relationship between education and a desire for more dramatic offerings. Recalling that the frequency of attendance is higher in the north, this seems to further indicate a dissatisfaction with existing theatre offerings in the south, particularly among better-educated people.

In both areas, concert and exhibit attendance are more consistently related to education than to occupation. Drama in the north reflects the same pattern, while in the south it does not.

Past research has shown that many of the background factors, such as education and occupation, that might affect attendance at a professional event tend to disappear when the event is a local one. The audience at a professional event is presumably there, at least in part, because they appreciate quality theatre. But the audience at the high school musical probably consists of anyone with family or friends on stage. To some extent, our study confirmed this, particularly in the north. However, the farm population remains difficult to attract under any circumstances.

In order to further explore the relation between background factors and attendance, we asked our respondents about their attitudes toward professional touring performances as opposed to local amateur events. Each type of event received about the same level of support from our respondents, but each appealed to a somewhat different group of people. Overall, people said they would be willing to pay $4-5 for a professional event and $3-4 for a local event. Within occupational categories, anticipated attendance of either a professional or local event declines as one moves from the professional towards the farm category. Farm and blue-collar workers express a preference for the local over the professional production, while among professionals the opposite is true. There is also a noticeable progression among educational categories. The preference among lower educational levels is for local productions. Among the higher levels, the tendency is reversed.

It is significant that in lower educational levels parents are much more likely to encourage their children to attend or participate than to do so themselves. This is especially true concerning local events, where parents presumably feel that they exercise some degree of control. This attitude seems to suggest that through appropriate programming aimed at a community's youth, parents might be persuaded to become supporters of the arts without necessarily becoming personally involved in them.

Occupation and education stand out as important factors in more active forms of support, such as helping with publicity, but there is no relationship between these activities and participation in the local community theatre. The obvious implication is that a willingness to participate and local initiative are important items to take into consideration when trying to build support for the arts among those who are not currently active or interested in them.

### *4. What do Local Organizations Offer?*

In terms of arts and leisure time activities, there seem to be three distinguishable categories of service organizations: groups for which the arts form their primary mission; organizations that include among their programs art-related activities; and organizations with a potential interest in including arts activities among their programs.

Among arts organizations we include community arts councils, community theatres, professional and semi-professional theatre, community concert series, choruses, and bands, smaller dance band and barbershop groups, painting societies, camera clubs, and any other groups organized around a common arts interest.

There are three community arts councils in our target counties: the Highland Area Arts Council (HAAC) in Freeport, the Arts Alliance of Ogle County (AAOC) in Oregon, and the Olney Arts Council. All three are relatively new but seem to have made themselves valuable to their communities. The HAAC provides opportunities for both participation and attendance: it offers classes, sponsors performing arts events, oversees the Freeport Art Museum, and reaches out into surrounding counties with an artist-in-residence program. The Olney Arts Council is more event-oriented, sponsoring three major programs annually: an arts and crafts fair, the Madrigal Dinner, and a theatrical production. The AAOC offers a more varied program that includes workshops, chamber concerts, and a continuous program of exhibitions. All of these organizations strive to fill gaps in their communities' cultural environment by offering events which otherwise wouldn't

be provided. HAAC is the only one with a professional staff and its own facility, which it is anxious to make available to other community groups. The Olney Arts Council has access to Olney Central College. The Oregon Public Library is the home of Lorado Taft's Eagle's Nest Art Colony collection; it has a charming gallery it makes available to the AAOC for exhibitions. The Alliance also has access to a castle called the Stronghold (built by a Chicago newspaper man) and several other buildings around the community.

Theatre seems to be one of the art forms most attractive to the residents of our target counties. The Timber Lake Playhouse near Mt. Carroll (Carroll County) is twenty miles away from any population center larger than 5,000, but it draws well for a four-month season which includes seven or eight shows. They have recently winterized their facility and are anxious to see it used (for the cost of expenses) by other community groups. There is no resident professional or semi-professional theatre company in the southeastern counties, although people travel often either to Sullivan or to Vincennes, Indiana for theatre. Community theatres are usually relatively accessible, although the nature and frequency of their offerings are widely disparate. The Mt. Carroll Community Players do one show a year. The Blackhawk Players of Ogle County do four or more. The stage facilities seem to be there in some form or another. The Winneshiek Players in Freeport have their own house. In Mt. Carroll, drama instructors from Shimer College have for several years been offering children's classes after school, with the city and local churches supplying rehearsal space.

Judging from our mailed questionnaires, music is actually a more attractive art form than theatre. Freeport and Olney have strong community concert series. Olney's series has reciprocal agreements with Centralia and Washington, Indiana which enable its residents to attend events in those cities; Olney Central College students are admitted free upon display of their identification. Community concert programs are paid for in advance through subscriptions sales, with the common planning strategy being to bring in a big name that will sell a program of competent unknowns.

Several communities have community bands and choirs, Olney and Lawrenceville being the most notable examples. Olney's band has been performing summer concerts in the park for over a hundred years. Lawrenceville's community choir grew out of a Bicentennial program combining the choirs of several churches, and in two years has become one of the community's most recognized arts resources. Flora also has an active community choir. Many towns have smaller musical groups, such as barbershoppers and Sweet Adelines, which might be members of a larger statewide organization. There is also a statewide organization of community theatres.

With so many people associating painting with the term, "the arts," the local painting society is usually one of a community's more visible arts resources. A number of painting societies offer participants the opportunity to paint with and receive criticism from others with the same interests. The groups range in size from ten to thirty-five members. The Eagle's Nest Art Group in Oregon is the largest and oldest. Operating on a small budget, the typical association will meet once a month, have an annual show, and bring in a number of speakers from nearby colleges for lectures or demonstrations. Although these meetings are generally open to the public, they seem to be attended only by the membership. As with any club, the social aspect of participation is very important.

Our second category of organizations includes those in which arts activities are important though not primary elements in their overall programming. Here we include schools, community colleges, cooperative extension units, libraries, historical societies, park districts, and churches.

As we noted above, people expect the schools to be the arts center of the community, and for obvious reasons: they have facilities and personnel. Most schools have music and arts departments, and their facilities are seen as important local resources. People often mentioned performances by the high school band or drama club as the most anticipated arts event of the year. School budgets allocate money for several assemblies to be held during regular school hours. Events are booked through agencies that specialize in high school assembly programs. Sometimes the student council will have a say in what is brought in, though one superintendent described the acts as being "Mickey Mouse: walking dogs and jugglers." His district had discontinued these events but the money is still available for something better. Schools open their facilities to the public when there is no conflict with school activities.

There are three community colleges in the nine counties, and all strive earnestly to live up to the name. Lincoln Trail College in Robinson ha Cultural Arts Advisory Committee, composed of interested area residents, which supplime the college's offerings by sponsoring a cultural series aimed more at the community at large. The colleges have, in addition to their degree programs, extensive continuing education programs, offering instruction in just about anything a group of people might express an interest in. These programs reach out into the district and utilize any available facility. They comprise some of the colleges' most visible and valuable functions. College art, music, and sometimes drama departments are new and still growing. Colleges are active as both producers and sponsors. As producers, they often invite the community to participate in their productions. The director of the drama department at Highland Community College in Freeport estimated that 40% of his participants were not students. All three colleges have good theatre facilities, with each seating about five hundred people. They are anxious to bring new people out to the campus and, whenever possible, will open their facilities to other community groups.

We include Cooperative Extension offices in this organizational category because of their Town and Country Art Show and their youth programs. The level of participation in the Art show varies from county to county, but many people know about it. One of its appeals lies in the fact that through its competitive format a talented individual has a chance for public recognition. Winners at the local level proceed to regional and statewide competitions. The event is usually handled by the home economics advisor or spun-off to other local organizations with the necessary interest and manpower. In Savanna, the Palisades Art League sponsored it. The arts might also form part of the Extension's youth programs as they do in 4-H arts and crafts classes.

However, Extension agencies are basically facilitative organizations which meet needs by matching people and resources. They generally do not have facilities of their own, nor do they have programming money in their budgets.

The public library, aided extensively by one of the state supported regional systems, provides the usual lending services. These systems give even the smallest member library access to hundreds of 16mm films and records, thousands of books, and access to the state's small inter-library loan system. Some libraries act occasionally as sponsors of small events and exhibitions. On the whole, a library is as flexible as its board. In Oregon, the chairman believes in the value of

nurturing the legacy of the Eagle's Nest Art Colony. Thus the library acts as the home of the permanent collection, and the chairman wants to add gallery and storage space. Libraries are funded by a municipal tax levy and are empowered to initiate referenda to increase the levy up to a certain maximum point. There is great reluctance to do so, however. People living out in the country are especially resistent to tax increases for services they do not think they will use. Yet, in many small towns, the library is the closest the city comes to supporting the arts.

Many communities have historical societies dedicated to preserving the heritage of the area. They collect and display memorabilia such as antique furniture, quilts, or clothing, and have fund-raising projects to supplement their income from membership dues. Through the Congress of Illinois Historical Societies and Museums, an arm of the State Historical Society, these local groups have access to technical advice and the resources of the State Historical Library and Society.

Park districts have a wide variety of interests. Some communities do not have one, although they probably spend a small percentage of municipal funds on leisure services (which might just mean upkeep of the park). A park district is supported by a separate leisure services tax, and will usually have a relatively large budget to work with. Where a district exists there will usually be some kind of summer recreational program that might include films, athletics, and arts and crafts activities. In Oregon, the park district has acted as a cultural sponsor, bringing in the New American Theatre Company from Rockford. The quality of a park district's recreational program depends heavily on its leaders. Some districts are staffed by volunteers, some by a student on a summertime basis, while others have a salaried director employed on a year-round basis. A major dilemma in the municipal provision of leisure time services in rural areas lies in the fact that unless there is a fairly large centralized population base, the support of outlying residents is needed to insure funds sufficient to make the program a good one. And again, people living out in the country are reluctant to pay for services they do not think they will use.

Churches are important centers of activities and expertise, particularly in music. Some have a salaried choir director and youth leader. Often various church choirs of a community will work together to perform special programs during the Christmas or Easter seasons. Churches have also sponsored religious art shows which generate large responses. Larger churches have space they are willing to make available to other community groups for meetings, rehearsal space, etc. And some churches have access to camping retreat areas.

The third group of organizations consists of those with the potential for interest in arts programming. We include within this group senior citizen centers, youth centers, and civic and social clubs and organizations.

Every county has a senior citizen center. These centers are primarily concerned with health services and try to meet the needs of those not living in homes for the elderly. Recreation is important, but the State suggests that it be a low priority. The sites we visited had ample space (which they willingly share), salaried directors, and a high level of community support. Programs in music, the arts and crafts are available to those who are interested. A kitchen band from Robinson even won an award at the state fair. Directors also put together trips, but participation in these is limited to those who can afford to go. The centers are interested in anything that might enable them to better serve their clientele. If the price is right, they could be potential arts sponsors.

Some communities have teen centers which may receive city support in the form of a building or some operating funds. The success or failure of these centers depends heavily on the quality of leadership behind them. They usually have dances and try to give the community's young people a place to get together after basketball games or other athletic events. But we did not come across any that did more extensive programming.

Civic organizations include the Jaycees, the Rotary, and the Business and Professional Women, as well as lodges like the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs. They raise money either for private philanthropy or to give to the community in the form of some kind of service. In Mt. Carroll, for example, the Jaycees handle the summer baseball league. Friendly competition exists among them. A Lions Club member stated, "The Kiwanis and the Rotary are the eaters and the meeters; the Lions are the doers." Civic organizations often do not have their own facilities, but they do have the manpower and interest to sponsor an event which might net them some money or which they see as being a valuable community service. The Business and Professional Women of of Lawrenceville sponsors a series of travelogues each year that is very popular. A program featuring Hawaii, for example, drew an audience of five hundred people.

Lodges, sororities, fraternities, women's clubs, etc., are primarily social, but also provide special services. The Savanna Women's Club raises scholarship money for local art students. (Scholarships are a common objective of most women's clubs.) The local women's club is often viewed as a key arts producer, but there may be an "upper-crust" or "old-fashioned" image in the minds of some that limits a wider participation in their activities. The lodges and fraternal groups are quite socially oriented, although they do support community projects and contribute percentages of their dues to charitable causes. Many have nice facilities and are popular dining spots. Some will make their facilities available to other community groups.

There are many other clubs organized along virtually every line of interest. If ten people in a community are interested in rocks, they will organize a rock club. One could also expect to find bicycle clubs, woodworking clubs, garden clubs, model airplane clubs, in short, clubs for just about anything one might do.

We were also interested in the general problems of these organizations. Money was mentioned often, but not nearly so frequently as we expected. Many groups are just too small to need much of it. Of greater significance was the need for active participants to share the load and to ensure the influx of new blood and the turnover of responsibility so that the organization could carry on over time. A gentleman in Flora noted that people will give their money before they will give their time. Organizations fail when too few people shoulder too much of the burden. The community theatre group in Flora exemplifies this problem. The number of active participants has shrunk to a core of eight or ten, and the organization has not produced a play in about two years. The core of interest remains, but people are involved in so many other things that they can not find the time to participate actively in theatre.

A major area of concern involved facilities. In some places, the demand exceeds the supply. The high school or college spring musical can tie up the school's stage for three months, precluding any work by the local community theatre or sponsoring groups dependent upon the same space. Local artists expressed a desire for a place to show their work on a regular basis.

Finally, we asked the representatives of the arts organizations how they thought the Arts Council could be of more use to them. They responded in an illuminating fashion.

Although money was a common suggestion, most comments concerned the provision of specific services. Many said the Arts Council should take steps to increase its visibility. A number of people only heard about the agency for the first time when we contacted them for the interview. People wanted to see more state representation at local events and state assistance at all levels of development. They were also interested in obtaining residencies.

A second group of concerns falls under the heading of "information." People wanted to know more about both alternative funding sources and sources of ideas and program outlines tested and proven workable in small community situations. Potential sponsors wanted to be able to pick and choose events they would like to see in their communities from a comprehensive list of all professional performing arts groups in the state. The list would include cost, technical and space requirements, and references from previous performances. They also wanted to know of resource people available for lectures, demonstrations, and workshops.

A third category of desires clustered around touring programs. Some respondents said they wanted to see more programs like the Free Street Theatre. Some added that they would like to see built into any such programs promotional and follow-up components to maximize the impact of the experience. They wanted to see consideration of rural values and needs in planning of, for example, the dance and theatre tour. And some wanted to see additional touring artists, such as jazz musicians, added to the Arts Council's programs.

Several community theatre people requested the arrangement of meetings or workshops that would bring together groups with similar interests, such as community theatres, which would offer training and advice, and facilitate the exchange of ideas and information.

The Timber Lake Theatre Company expends a good portion of its budget each year holding regional auditions for non-equity actors. Representatives wondered if the Arts Council might be able to assemble some kind of audition that would benefit theirs and other similar companies.

There were several affirmations of the value of seed grants that might be issued during the first year of an organization's operation when community interest would still be young, fresh, and strong.

People suggested that the Arts Council utilize more extensively local colleges and universities. One gentleman pointed out that attaching the name of a college to an event gives the activity "instant prestige."

This list should be used with caution. It is by no means exhaustive: interviews with other people from other organizations might reveal different priorities. But it *does* suggest areas of interest and concern which merit closer examination.

# IV. Drawing the Implications: Planning

*1. Implications for Programming: the Particular Community*

Our analysis turned up many implications for future arts programming in rural areas.

The first thing to note is that people live in small towns because they like it, and that while arts activities may be lacking, there are dozens of other things going on. Between the activities of the schools, churches, and a multitude of clubs and organizations, there is something of interest happening almost every night of the week; and in a small town there is usually only audience and actors enough for one big event an evening. In our interviews, the most frequently mentioned obstacle to attendance was lack of time due to conflicting events.

The obvious implication of this is that you must schedule an event very carefully. More importantly, you must understand the potential audience: its preferences for different kinds of events and activities (arts and non-arts); its attitudes, values and mores, and the reasons for them; and the significant categories of individuals within the population as they relate to arts attendance and participation. Unless you know the kinds of things important to people, you cannot expect to satisfy them. You have to know the territory.

One of the most significant findings of our research is that our two study areas, though both predominantly rural, differ in attitudes, in the way in which those attitudes are related to each other, and in the factors that influence them. Overall, people desire more arts activity than they perceive exists, indicating some degree of discontent. Levels of desires are approximately the same in the two areas. But perceptions in the north exceed those in the south and seem to be concentrated within a small segment of the population: young professionals. Desires are also high within this group, but given the high perceptions and a high frequency of attendance, it seems to be a reasonably satisfied subpopulation. Other subgroups in the north do not follow suit. The professional population in the south has high desires, low perceptions, and low frequency of participation, indicating a latent interest in the arts that would not be revealed in audience profiles of southern events. Availability (in absolute numbers, disregarding professional/amateur distinctions) of different arts activities in the two areas is similar, but there is a substantial difference in the number of those attending theatre in each area. We know from our interviews that northern residents have easy access to professional or semi-professional theatre, while southern residents do not. Dissatisfaction in the south, therefore, seems to center around the quality of what is available.

The policy implication of this is that the two areas present different problems, and programs devised to meet the needs of one might not necessarily meet the needs of the other. In the north perceptions on the whole are higher, but there remain dissatisfied subgroups that are not being reached. In the south, on the other hand, we have a population that seems to be more dissatisfied, epitomized by a professional population that appears to be just waiting for something to happen that interests it. A professional touring group in the south could be expected to meet clearly expressed needs of a certain portion of the population, while the same tour in the north might be a superfluous use of resources, given other more pressing needs.

Furthermore, in the north, behavior is closely related to occupation and education. In the south, however, this relationship is not present. There, differences are again most likely due to the different kinds of activities available in the two areas, and the different types of audiences which they attract. Dramatic offerings in the south, for example, consist of amateur community and school productions which are more likely to attract a broader cross-section of the audience.

It seems that professionals are less likely to attend them, while blue-collar and farm groups (the hardest group to attract) and groups with lower levels of education show a preference for the local event. They appear to be motivated less by an interest in the event, than by an interest in seeing friends or family on stage.

Another salient feature emerging from our analysis lies in the perceived lack of opportunities for young people. No one seems to know just what they want. Some say that there is nothing for them to do. Others say that to give them more things to do would just be giving them more ways to get into trouble. One person said, in jest, "The only way to keep the kids off the streets is to put all of the bars on the same side." Dissatisfaction with existing opportunities however, cuts across all subgroups, presenting the broadest (although not the most opinionated) constituency of interest. A significant number of respondents, mostly in the blue-collar or farm occupational categories, and the lower educational levels, were more willing to encourage their children to attend or participate in an activity than they were to attend or participate themselves. The situation suggests that arts programming aimed at the young, might be an important element to consider in any program attempting to involve new people in the arts. In the south it might be made part of a general arts development program, or in the north, part of a more focused outreach.

Our interviews turned up a number of important values, interests, and perspectives that could have implications for a program attempting to involve more people in the arts, especially if the semantic problems caused by the images people not involved in the arts often associate with the term are kept in mind. We stated earlier that people made "classical" associations with the arts, and do not see the relevance of museum paintings, opera, or the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to their own daily experiences. This being the case, a good place for an arts development program to start would be to isolate established aspects of community life that might readily lend themselves to arts programming. You have to know and understand something to value it. People may not initially be interested in the arts as art, but they might become interested if they viewed the arts as an effective means to another end they value, or if they see the arts as "kin" to other things which they enjoy doing, but which they might not previously have considered "art."

### *2. The Role of the Arts in Rural Communities*

While every community is different, there are a number of values which stand out as particularly pervasive which could be used to show the people of a community how the arts are valuable to them in a "language" meaningful to them. They are listed below in summary fashion. In the broadest terms, we would attempt to convince residents of a community that the arts can enhance the most appealing aspects of living in their town and strengthen the weak points.

The arts are an effective community development tool because they improve the liveability of a community at many different levels. For example, the arts give people of all ages creative alternatives to the ways they can spend their leisure time, making the community a more satisfying place in which to live. The arts can also improve the economic and social well-being of a community by making it a more desirable place in which to live. Previous research has shown that business executives and professional people are more attracted to communities with richer cultural environments. Our study confirms that professional people are the portion of the population most desirous of quality arts activities. There aren't many small communities that have all the doctors they need. Nor are there many with sufficient or sufficiently interesting jobs to keep

their talented young people from moving away. New industry means new jobs and a higher tax base, making possible a more complete provision of "basic services." Local government officials who often seem to be more concerned with providing these basic services (street care, snow removal, fire and police protection) than "human" ones, might be persuaded that the two should not be dichotomized, but rather, that they go hand in hand. Existing businesses profit from the traffic of a centrally located arts event. For everyone, an investment in the arts is an investment in the community.

The arts can symbolize a community's pride in itself. Residents of small towns are very proud of their community. Each interviewee seemed to feel that his/her town was better than the next one down the road for a particular reason. Communities like to have something they can point to and say, "Look what we have that no one else does." It might be the people, the town square, or the general appearance of the city. There is much interest in a downtown's appearance, and the arts can play a vital role in a city's beautification program. For instance, a cluster of well-perserved, important, old downtown buildings stands as an architectural record of a community's heritage, and offers a visible display of a community's self-respect and pride in its history. Galena, home of Ulysses S. Grant, has a model preservation program. An historic preservation ordinance protects its downtown from new influences not in harmony with the old. The town has eighty houses on the National Register of Historic Places, and attracts several million tourists a year.

The arts themselves set communities apart as distinct and distinguished. Oregon is well known as the home of Lorado Taft and his sculpture of Blackhawk, majestically overlooking the Rock River Valley; it also has an Autumn on Parade festival which draws thousands from a wide area during the fall. Sullivan (pop. 4,112) is not in our study area, but presents a case worth mentioning in that people all over Illinois recognize it as the home of the Little Theatre, an equity house which brings in nationally recognized stars. Palestine (pop. 1,640) is the home of Palestine Pioneer Days, the biggest rodeo east of the Mississippi. It is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and attracts tens of thousands every Labor Day weekend. Olney, because of its long music tradition, is viewed as a cultural center of the southeastern counties. Some communities have concentrations of particular ethnic groups who might be encouraged to celebrate their traditions. There are any number of ways a community might underscore its individuality.

People also take pride in the local talent, which is there in sometimes surprising amounts. Any arts development program should set a high priority on finding out who these people are and getting them involved. A good programming idea would be to have a photographic exhibition of the people of a community. Photographs might be taken by community residents, or by a professional as part of a residency or workshop. By emphasizing the art in crafts you might tap the widespread interest in crafts and folk arts that exists in the two areas. Each region has a rich folk tradition. Many people play an instrument, or are interested in ceramics, quilting, woodwork, antiques, weaving, and so on. Interest in rocks can be broadened to include jewelry. The Arts Council, or some organization associated with the classical arts, might sponsor an exhibition of some kind comparing related art forms: a violinist and a fiddler at the same demonstration or concert, for example. It would not be difficult to find out which crafts the people of a community might be interested in, and to bring in an exhibition of the best. The audience is out there; all you have to do is strike a familiar note.

People enjoy going out for an evening, whether that means dining out, seeing a show, or just getting together with friends. Arts programming adds an extra dimension to such activities. Community theatres might, for example, investigate the possibility of adding a dinner component to attract new audiences. The Blackhawk Players in Byron have a contractual arrangement with a

local restaurateur by which he provides dinner and performing space: dinner and a show cost $10. The gentleman representing the Players estimated that two-thirds of the audience have dinner, and that about half of those are there because it is a good chance to have a drink with friends. A business arrangement allows the theatre people to devote their full time and energy to the production, leaving dinner arrangements to the restaurateur. The major problem, of course, is space. The best situation would be to have both the dinner and the play in the same physical plant, or a cabaret-style arrangement in the same room. But there aren't that many restaurants around, and fewer still with the space to make available to a community theatre troupe. It might be possible to interest one of the lodges or fraternal groups, like the Elks or the American Legion, in programs of this kind. They are likely to have dining facilities, and occasionally adaptable space.

Business involvement in the arts need not be limited to restaurants. A savings and loan, for example, might be interested in sponsoring an exhibition. They have the security and often the gallery space, too. In Galena, antique dealers open up their shops during the holiday season for a "Christmas Walk." But Galena is also illustrative in a negative sense. It is by far the most tourist-oriented community in our sample area, drawing several million people a year. But it has difficulty getting tourists to stay overnight. People visit Galena, but they don't necessarily spend any money. Dubuque, Iowa is only fifteen miles of good road away, and people will often spend the night there or drive on to Rockford or Chicago. Commercial interest in the community would undoubtedly support any arts endeavor that could persuade people to stay for the evening, or better still, all night.

The arts, of course, are major providers of entertainment. Most of the people in our sample counties who attend theatre view it primarily as entertainment. Musicals draw the largest crowds, followed by light comedy. Some community theatres find musicals too expensive to produce, but when feasible, a musical has the potential to involve the most people. Individuals who sing, dance, or play an instrument, as well as those who like to act are attracted, and a larger number of community participants means a larger audience.

Small communities are highly sociable places and the arts can enhance and encourage this sociability. A gentleman from Mt. Carroll summed up his experience of the small town for us, "I like the inconvenience of being stopped by friends every couple of minutes when I am walking somewhere." The arts bring people together who enjoy being together. Events in which family and friends are participating will attract people of all kinds.

Arts programming should also take into account the major community celebrations already in existence. The old maxim "crowds draw crowds" is useful in this connection. Each year there are some events that the people of a community look forward to more than any others. In Xenia it is the Kiwanis fish fry. In Mt. Morris it is the "Let Freedom Ring" Fourth of July celebration. In Galena it is Cantonment Days, which include a series of events such as an art fair and a tour of homes. In another community it might be the county fair. An arts event held in conjunction with any of these events will be guaranteed exposure.

Clubs and organizations also offer "pre-assembled" groups of people. Organizations have the structure and manpower to sponsor an arts-related project that might overlap with their own interests by giving them the chance to perform a community service or to raise money for projects of their own. Timber Lake Playhouse has an interesting arrangement in which, on slow nights, they offer a one-dollar rebate on every ticket the organization sells, with a minimum number of sales necessary to collect. The organization makes money, and the theatre fills up seats that would otherwise be empty.

Chances to see a performance of professional quality don't come along very often. Small-town sponsors are understandably reluctant to take high cost risks; most don't have the kind of resources to withstand a disaster. Sponsor-development workshops on how to present a saleable performance, perhaps sponsored by the Arts Council, would be valuable. Ideally, such a seminar would include a practical follow-up program in which advance people would actively lead the local sponsor through every step of the process. It is important that residents of a small community develop a realistic sense of what can be done for how much. The follow-up experience might include financial incentives to encourage a local organization to take a chance, and so ease the fear of incurring a loss. Many good projects don't get off the ground because people just assume that they can't be done.

We have already stated that people are most likely to attend an event if they are familiar with the subject matter or the performers, either personally or by reputation. Professional one-night stands in small towns have traditionally done poorly because they allow no time to "get acquainted." Residencies offer an alternative way to present quality events to the public. A resident theatre company might, for example, develop a rapport with the community through daily interaction and regular performances. Ideally, some element of community participation could be built into it, although there might be union restrictions on what the actors may, in fact, do.

New community interests could be generated by alternative art forms which give the community the chance to see something it can't see every day. Mime, for example, would be a good medium. It has the potential for humor (which is important) and could be done for a relatively low cost. Likewise, quality puppeteers for children could provide a similar function. People might respond favorably to a demonstration by a good cartoonist.

The arts could add a creative dimension to a community's summer recreational program. June heralds the appearance of many young people with extra time on their hands. An artist-in-residence might be added to the summer staff, with part of the artist's responsibilities being to supervise the creation by a city's youth of something of lasting value: a mural, a sculpture, etc. Or students might write and produce a play to be performed in the park. The municipal park seems to be one of a community's prized resources, and an event held there is going to attract attention. The Milledgeville Park District shows films outdoors during the summer months, and everyone in town turns out. Most small communities don't have a theatre, and if they do they have to wait for months to get a big-name film. A film series, featuring good films that have seen their day at the movie houses, could be a popular program.

Small communities tend to be intensely competitive. They are fiercely loyal to their own, whether it be the high school basketball team or the high school band. If the band is good, the community will help finance trips to participate in competitions. Unfortunately, it seems that people don't often recognize the quality or value of the band until an out-of-town judge tells them about it. Area or regional contests and festivals can serve this purpose, showcasing high school bands, choirs, or art programs, with awards given for outstanding performances. Competitiveness is also visible at the individual level. Everyone likes to be recognized, and competition gives a person a chance to stand out. Art fairs that offer financial awards -- even in very small amounts -- draw significantly higher numbers of participants and spectators.

While we might hesitate to praise the product to the point that the value of the process would be ignored, it seems that the competitive urge could be exploited in creative ways to involve new people in the arts. The local historical society might sponsor a contest for one of the traditional arts, with a purchase prize awarded to the winning quilt, wood carving, etc. The

award-winning piece could be put on permanent display at the society. The same type of organization could easily sponsor an essay contest on a theme of local interest, again offering a small prize. Arts competitions of whatever nature are extremely important devices for mobilizing the latent creativity in many people who need some immediate and tangible goal formulated for them. In this way, arts competitions serve to "develop" the arts in a community.

One might also work to involve new people in the arts through established centers of ongoing community activity, such as churches and schools. There is much interest in religious art. A church in Newton sponsored a religious art show open to the community, and the response amazed everyone. "People came out of the woodwork," we were told. Members of the Eagle's Nest Art Group in Oregon have assembled religious art shows and toured them among area churches. One resident cited gospel concerts in Flora as the only example in his memory of a successful one-night event performed by people from outside the community. Union choir programs during the holiday season involve many people and are much anticipated.

Data from both the mailed questionnaire and the interviews indicated a high level of interest and pride in community schools. The data indicates that it is possible to involve parents indirectly through their children. If parents are reluctant to have the arts overemphasized in the schools, school resources might be extended after hours for interested students, or even into the summer months. There is interest in and money available for quality assemblies which might be used as "teasers" for community performances in the evening, or as the initial steps in a series of events that would follow and build on it: assemblies during school hours for the entertainment of all, with workshops during or after school for those students with the most interest. Top-notch resource people could be brought in for special activities or short residencies. The Carroll County schools used Illinois Office of Education Gifted Funds to put together a first annual Gifted Arts Festival in Savanna, drawing 150 students from all over the county and resource people from the tri-state area for a day of special workshops. Coordinators anticipate expanding the format next year to include an evening performance and exhibition of the students' work.

In summary, we have found a clearly expressed need for arts opportunities. The need takes different shapes and forms in the two study areas. Sometimes it is latent; sometimes it can be traced to demographic determinants that vary from area to area and community to community. Any successful arts development program would have to be flexible enough to accomodate the different needs of various areas and subpopulations. Each community region targeted for a community arts development program requires individual investigation. Asking a few key questions is an invaluable beginning.

There are three common themes which stand out in small communities and which serve as a useful framework for further inquiry:

One is widespread interest in opportunities for youth.

Another is community pride and a desire for local initiative and participation. A program will not succeed in a small town if it doesn't have grassroot support.

And third, there is a powerful desire to preserve the treasured qualities of small-town living.

Any effective arts development program must express these underlying themes and values. It must present the arts as fitting comfortably within the existing value structure and, at the same time, giving the community a new dimension of vitality which will preserve those qualities small-town residents cherish.

### *3. The Roles of State Agencies*

This project has been worth the time and financial support of both state agencies in a number of ways:

The data collection process disseminated information about the two agencies to people who had never heard of either one.

The research documents the existence of an arts constituency in Illinois' rural areas, giving the Arts Council in particular a tool that may provide assistance in securing support from the state legislature.

Not only does the data demonstrate a need, but it clarifies the nature of that need by giving us an idea of who is involved in which activities, and who is not involved and why. It confirms the observation that behavior alone does not measure attitudes. The preferences of the professional population in the southeastern counties solidly illustrates this contention.

The data also enables us to see how people understand key terms such as "the arts" and indicates how those terms might be "redefined" in language more meaningful to individual communities.

The research maps out areas of service which the different agencies might be able to offer without needless overlap. For example, there is keen local interest in facilities, but the Arts Council does not grant financial support for "bricks and mortar" projects. The Department of Local Government Affairs, however, is the authoritative source for information regarding a number of state and federal assistance programs that could be useful in an arts-related context to small communities. Community Development Block Grants and Revenue Sharing are two examples of programs under which money could conceivably go to a "bricks and mortar" project that would culturally benefit a community. The agency also offers planning assistance and help in identifying funding sources for communities interested in downtown improvement. And it is the place to go to learn about home rule and the use of tax levies and other local financing tools, all of which could have important implications for a local government unit interested in increasing its financial base for the purpose of expanding arts programming.

The Arts Council benefits from the information more directly. In addition to the data and its implications, the agency has gained an inventory of arts organizations of all sizes in the sample counties, with "vital statistics" for each, as well as a supplemental list of non-arts organizations with potential interest in arts programs.

Most important, the data provides a clearer picture of the values, activities, resources, and needs of small communities which will enable the Arts Council to establish an accurate set of priorities for policy formulation and programming strategies. There is a wealth of suggestions here for programming ideas that could be of value at both the state and local level.

The data suggests new questions that might be explored to further define the rural arts picture and the state agencies' role in it. For example, we have an idea of who is involved in the arts and who is not. But we still don't quite understand how to reach some segments of the population. As we have mentioned several times before, the farm population in particular seems to defy categorization. The young also present question marks. We know that they can be an important key to the rest of the population, but we need further investigation as to how they might best be approached.

Working relationships with other state offices should be explored. The Office of Education is a relevant example. Public schools have the potential to provide a vast network of sponsors. Colleges and universities also have resources that can be tapped for arts development purposes; Indiana's Campus Arts program, for example, might be studied. It would also be useful to inventory state or regional service organizations with special interests, such as the Central Illinois Camera Club Association, the Congress of Illinois Historical Societies and Museums, and the statewide association existing for community theatres.

Finally, the data suggests alternative support strategies. A number of frequently expressed needs -- information, frequent contact with the state agency, financial, technical, and moral support -- suggest that a regional arts coordinator could provide a considerable service to the area. Such a person would constitute a liaison with the Arts Council; act as a catalyst involving new groups and stimulating local talent; serve as a "how-to" person; and keep a finger on the pulse of the rural community arts situation while maintaining a steady push for quality.

# V. Postscript

This research project has largely focused on how to involve new people in the arts. We have suggested that people will come to understand the value of the arts most readily if they can identify the arts with concerns and activities of proven value to them.

On the other hand, it might be argued that simple involvement is not enough to change attitudes. Someone, for example, might see the theatre as entertainment, and in the short run, that identification might motivate him to attend it. But as soon as something more entertaining comes along, the new participant will be lost.

This might be true. A person could conceivably sit through a play and get nothing out of it but a few laughs. But at least that person has had the chance to experience an alternative. The next time that person makes a decision on what to do for entertainment, the decision will be based on a wider range of experience. That person will know what he is missing.

The most that any arts development program can really hope to do is to give people the broadest possible range of creative, meaningful alternatives from which to choose. The individual always makes the final decision. It is possible that the impact of the initial exposure to theatre--as entertainment or anything else--will touch a deeper note than just "laughs" and produce a long-term effect on that person's life - on his feelings, his values, his understanding. And that is why quality art is so important. The arts development program should have as its primary goal a commitment to artistic quality in order to enhance the nature of every arts experience.

# Appendices

*APPENDIX A*

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS STUDY, THE ARTS REFERS TO ANY CREATIVE ACTIVITY WHICH ONE MIGHT OBSERVE OR PARTICIPATE IN. EXAMPLES INCLUDE MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE, AND THE ARTS AND CRAFTS, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO THESE.

1. How important are the arts in community life? Very Important:_____ Moderately Important:_____ Not Very Important:_____ Completely Unimportant:_____

2. How important do you think the arts should be in community life? Very Important:_____ Moderately Important:_____ Not Very Important:_____ Completely Unimportant:_____

3. When you were in school, did you participate in dramatic performances, concerts, exhibits, or other arts activities? Yes:_____ No:_____
   How frequently did you do so? Regularly:_____ Occasionally:_____ Seldom:_____ Don't Recall:_____

4. When you were in school, did you attend dramatic performances, concerts, or exhibits? Yes:_____ No:_____
   How frequently did you do so? Regularly:_____ Occasionally:_____ Seldom:_____ Don't Recall:_____

5. Do you have school-age children living at home? Yes:_____ No:_____

6. How much are the arts stressed in the public schools of your community? A Lot:_____ A Moderate Amount:_____ Not Very Much:_____ Not At All:_____ Don't Know:_____

7. How much do you think the arts should be stressed in the public schools? A Lot:_____ A Moderate Amount:_____ Not Very Much:_____ Not At All:_____

8. Are you satisfied with the ways you can spend your leisure time in your community? Yes:_____ No:_____
   If no, what kinds of activities are missing?

9. How do you feel about the amount of arts activities (excluding TV) that is available to you in your community? Too Much:_____ Just Right:_____ Too Little:_____

10. How do you feel about the amount of arts activities (excluding TV) that is available to your children in your community? Too Much:_____ Just Right:_____ Too Little:_____ Does Not Apply:_____

11. What kinds of arts activities have you participated in?

12. What kinds of arts activities seem to be most readily available to you (and your children)?

13. From your point of view, what kinds of arts activites seem to be most needed in your community?

14. Please rank the following sources of arts activity according to how important you think they are in your community. Put a 1 beside the source you think most important, a 2 beside the source you think second most important, etc. Leave blank the sources that make no contribution.
    _____Schools
    _____Area Colleges
    _____University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service
    _____Local Clubs and Organizations
    _____Area Churches
    _____Professional Touring Groups
    _____Libraries
    _____Other (Please Specify:_____)

    Now put an "X" beside the source that you think should be most important.

15. Have there been live drama performances in your community in the last year? Yes:_____ No:_____
    Have you gone to see any? Yes:_____ No:_____
    If yes, how frequently? About once:_____ About 3 - 4 times:_____ About once a month or more:_____
    How do you feel about the amount of live drama available to you? Too Much:_____ Just Right:_____ Too Little:_____

16. Have there been live concerts in your community in the last year? Yes:_____ No:_____
    Have you gone to see any? Yes:_____ No:_____
    If yes, how frequently? About once:_____ About 3 - 4 times:_____ About once a month or more:_____

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE

How do you feel about the amount of live concerts available to you? Too Much:____
Just Right:____ Too Little:____

17. Have there been any arts or arts and crafts exhibits in your community in the last year?
Yes:____ No:____
Have you gone to see any? Yes:____ No:____
If yes, how frequently? About once:____ About 3 - 4 times:____
About once a month or more:____
How do you feel about the amount of arts or arts and crafts exhibits available to you? Too Much:____ Just Right:____ Too Little:____

18. Have you taken an art or crafts class in the last year? Yes:____ No:____

19. Do you think there are sufficient opportunities for arts instruction in your community?
Yes:____ No:____
If no, what is missing?

20. Please rank the following factors according to how likely they are to prevent you from attending an arts event. Put a 1 beside the factor you think is most important, a 2 beside the factor you think is second most important, etc. Leave blank those that are not important factors to you.
_____Event too far away
_____Not enough information about the event
_____Not interested in the arts
_____Not enough time
_____Poor quality of the event
_____Not enough interest in the specific art form
_____Too expensive
_____Other (Please Specify:_____)

21. Suppose that a professional theatre company visited your community to perform at reasonable prices:
Would you attend performances? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
Would you encourage your children to attend? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
Would you help with publicity? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
How much would you pay for such a performance?

22. Suppose that, instead of an out-of-town professional company, live performances were offered regularly with people from your community doing all of the acting, directing, technical work, and sponsorship, again at reasonable prices:
Would you attend performances? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
Would you encourage your children to attend? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
Would you participate? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
Would you help with publicity? Yes:____ No:____ Uncertain:____
How much would you pay for such a performance?

23. How important is it to attract tourists to your community? Very Important:____
Moderately Important:____ Not Very Important:____ Completely Unimportant:____

24. How important is it to attract new business to your community? Very Important:____
Moderately Important:____ Not Very Important:____ Completely Unimportant:____

25. If you think more tourists or business should be attracted, how effective do you think good local arts programs could be in doing so? Very Effective:____
Moderately Effective:____ Not Very Effective:____ Completely Ineffective:____

26. What are your favorite hobbies and pastimes?

27. What is the most enjoyable event of any kind that you have attended in your community?

28. What is the most enjoyable arts-related event that you have attended anywhere within the last year?

Zip Code:_____ Male:_____ Female:_____

Marital Status:_____ Occupation:_____

How long have you lived in your community? _____

Age: Under 18:_____ 18-25:_____ 26-35:_____ 36-45:_____ 46-65:_____ Over 65:_____

Please check all of the following schools that you have attended:
Grade School:____ High School:____ Vocational School:____
College:____ Graduate School:____ Art School:____

Map of Sample Counties